

In the News

Manteca Courthouse Increases Security

Court employees and the public have reason to feel safer at the Manteca courthouse in San Joaquin County.

An article in the January 22, 2001, *Record* (Stockton) titled "Courthouse Security Branches Out" described the newly upgraded security system at the Manteca courthouse entrance. The system includes two security guards, a walk-through metal detector, and an X-ray machine. The story also mentioned that the upgrades will be paid for with a share of the \$228,000 the Judicial Council awarded to the Superior Court of San Joaquin County for security expenses. In fiscal year 1999-2000, a total of \$243 million for improvements in court security was distributed to counties throughout the state.

The article noted that the added security has been well received by both employees and visitors. Given the media's coverage of the change, many of the

county's residents may feel a little more secure about visiting their courts.

Other court-related programs in the news:

"New Program Treats Mentally Ill Offenders," *San Francisco Daily Journal*, February 26, 2001

Detailed the Superior Court of Santa Clara County's launch of its juvenile mental health court, whose mission is to identify and provide alternative treatments for youthful offenders with serious mental illnesses.

"New North District Courthouse to Be Opened in Palmdale on Feb. 5," *Metropolitan News Enterprise* (Los Angeles), January 26, 2001

Described the Superior Court of Los Angeles County's new North District courthouse, which opened in Palmdale on



Julianne Anderson (right), who serves as a legal process supervisor for the Superior Court of San Joaquin County, observed Tom Doucette of U.S. Testing Equipment install a new security system at the entrance to the county's courthouse in Manteca. Photo: Michael McCollum; reprinted with permission from the January 22, 2001, edition of the *Record*

February 5 and will serve as a site for small claims, probate, and family law matters.

"Disarray in Drug Court," *East Bay Express* (Berkeley), January 22, 2001

Detailed how the drug court that was established in the Berkeley courthouse of the Superior Court of Alameda County works to help drug users.

"Riverside Superior Court to Combine Drug, Mental Health, Abuse Cases," *Metropolitan News Enterprise* (Los Angeles), January 8, 2001

Reported on the Superior Court of Riverside County's new drug abuse, domestic violence, and mental health court. ■

Sacramento Court Unveils E-Filing

Filing small claims cases over the Internet has become a reality.

In January the Superior Court of Sacramento County became the first court in the state to offer electronic filing (e-filing)

in small claims cases. Litigants can now initiate a small claims case or file a cross-complaint in an existing small claims matter by sending court documents through the superior court's Web site, www.saccourt.com. Currently pro-

cessing more than 12,000 cases each year in its small claims division, the Superior Court of Sacramento County has long-term plans that include the expansion of e-filing to other divisions.

California Senate Bill 367, which was passed in September 1999, added to the Code of Civil Procedure language authorizing trial courts to adopt local rules of court that permit electronic filing and service of documents. Since that time, several of the state's trial courts have begun to develop the tools and procedures to make that a reality.

"We have received positive feedback from the public as well as from other courts that would like to implement the product," says Lynn Maynard, Information Technology Director for the Superior Court of Sacramento County.

The court developed its e-filing Web site with assistance from Microsoft Consulting Services and Carta, Inc., of Sacramento. Microsoft provided technical support for the overall design, development, and implementation of this product. Carta, Inc., assisted court staff in the creation of the user interface. During the six-month development period, court officials incorporated suggestions from the public, court staff members, and the county's Legal Advisory Clinic.



To use the electronic system, filers need a valid e-mail address and credit card unless they qualify for a fee waiver. The cost for filing a small claims case, \$20, is the same at the courthouse and online. Security measures have been designed into the e-filing system to protect users against unauthorized use of their credit cards.

The Superior Court of Sacramento County developed its e-filing system with help from a grant from the Judicial Council. The council was directed by the Legislature to develop statewide standards for e-filing by 2003. Sacramento County's new e-filing service will serve as a resource for development of the standards and as a pilot project for courts statewide.

For more information, contact Gerry Root, Public Information Officer, Superior Court of Sacramento County, 916-874-6880, e-mail: rootg@saccourt.com. ■

Ventura Court Opens Juror Business Center

Prospective jurors in Ventura County are a more productive group, thanks to the superior court's new Juror Business Center at its main courthouse in Ventura.

The business center is a quiet room off the jury assembly area in which potential jurors have access to workstations, data ports, a fax machine, and a copier. The court invited representatives of the news media to tour the Juror Business Center at a media open house on January 25.

"We are trying to make jury service a little more convenient and productive," says Robert Sherman, Deputy Executive Officer of the Superior Court of Ventura County. "We have already received feedback that potential jurors whose employers ordinarily do not compensate them for their time at jury service are being paid because they can work at the business center."

The concept for the business center



The Superior Court of Ventura County's new Juror Business Center gives potential jurors access to workstations, data ports, a fax machine, and a copier. Photo: Courtesy of the Superior Court of Ventura County

stemmed from a town hall meeting conducted by former Presiding Judge Charles W. Campbell, Jr., and Executive Officer Sheila Gonzalez during Juror Appreciation Week last May.

For more information, contact Robert Sherman, Deputy Executive Officer, Superior Court of Ventura County, 805-654-2964.

AOC Improving Data Collection

Arguably, every aspect of court operations would benefit from more reliable data. Budgeting, strategic planning, policy analysis, legislative advocacy, and even day-to-day management in California's court system all depend on accurate information. Unfortunately, data collection is often a difficult and time-consuming process.

In an effort to improve the quality of data it collects and to ease the burden on trial courts that provide the data, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is working on initiatives to improve the design of its surveys, limit the number of surveys it disseminates, and improve communication within the agency about information that is already available.

Beginning in April and continuing on a quarterly basis, the AOC's Research and Planning (R&P) Unit will send the trial courts a calendar that lists the requests for data that the AOC anticipates making during the forthcoming quarter. For each survey, the calendar will specify an intended purpose, a contact person within the AOC, and the anticipated distribution dates.

Last year, in order to study and improve the AOC's surveying process, R&P staff created a model survey calendar to track 30 requests for data or ongoing research projects in the trial courts. They then used the model calendar to analyze how the AOC was surveying the courts, why the data were being requested, and what kinds of information were being received.

One of the determinations reached by R&P staff was that preparation of the budget was the single most common reason cited by AOC staff for sending surveys to the courts, followed by the need for evaluation and planning.

Another piece of information extracted from the model calendar is that most AOC data requests involve program-level information. Unlike the Judicial Branch Statistical Information System (JBSIS), which captures case-level information, surveys and other data collection efforts frequently seek information on the operations of the court, such as the utilization of subordinate judicial officers, interpreters, family law facilitators, jurors, and courtroom support staff.

The R&P Unit hopes to use the new survey calendar to reduce the number of surveys sent to the courts, eliminate duplication in the collection of data, and improve the quality of information it receives. R&P staff are consulting on survey construction with other divisions in the AOC and working with other staff members to gather data through methods other than surveys, where appropriate.

The transition to state funding of the trial courts is a driving force behind the efforts to improve the AOC's data collection. Historically, each local court tracked its own operations independently of other courts. For example, one court might count the number of jurors who completed service by including only those people who were sworn jurors, while another court might include in its count people who sat through voir dire but were not chosen as jurors. Increasingly, in order to support trial courts' budget requests, the AOC must document their workloads in a way that is consistent across the state.

"For budget purposes, it is crucial that we begin to establish uniform measures of basic trial court operations," says Fred Miller, Manager of the AOC's R&P Unit. "Under state funding, we must document our judicial priorities in terms that adequately communicate these needs to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Department of Finance."

The next step for the AOC in improving data collection will be to establish collection standards and regular reporting schedules that will eliminate the need for many of the unscheduled surveys that are sent to the courts. R&P staff is currently working on a proposal to define basic indicators of trial court performance, which involves working cooperatively with the courts and technology vendors in standardizing the reporting of basic areas of trial court operations.

● For more information, contact Dag MacLeod, Research and Planning, 415-865-7660, e-mail: dag.macleod@jud.ca.gov. ■

CountyProfile

Mono



Dedicated in 1880, the Bridgeport courthouse is the second oldest working courthouse in the state.

Geographic area: 3,030 square miles, 80 percent of which is federal land

Population: In January 2000 the population was 10,900, making Mono the 55th largest county in the state. By 2020 the population is expected to grow to more than 14,000.

Demographics:
Age: 0-19 ≈ 27%; 20-39 ≈ 27%; 40-59 ≈ 33%; 60-79 ≈ 11%; 80+ ≈ 2%
Race/Ethnicity: White ≈ 79%; Hispanic ≈ 16%; American Indian ≈ 3.3%; Asian or Pacific Islander ≈ 1.2%; Black ≈ 0.5%

Number of court locations: 2

Number of authorized judges: 2

Number of staff: 10

Caseload: Filings for 1999-2000 totaled 6,365

Annual operating budget: \$1,440,008 as of January 2001

Presiding judge: Edward Forstenzer

Executive officer: Bob Dennis

Of note: Bridgeport became the county seat in 1863 after it was determined that the former county seat, Aurora, was in the state of Nevada.

Sources: Superior Court of Mono County; California State Department of Finance



Small County Mini-Grants Awarded

The Administrative Office of the Courts' (AOC) Trial Court Programs (TCP) Division recently awarded grants to 16 courts through its Small County Mini-Grant Program. This program, which has been in place for the last two years, assists small courts with funding for projects such as court unification, transition to full state funding, and training.

The total funds allocated for the Small County Mini-Grant Program are \$125,000. The courts submit grant applications either individually or regionally. Individual court applications are eligible for \$10,000 to \$25,000 in grant funds, and the maximum for regional court applications is \$50,000.

"The grants provide an additional funding source to help

smaller courts enhance access and improve delivery of services to the public," says José Octavio Guillén, Director of Trial Court Programs at the AOC.

During this grant cycle, TCP received 19 applications from 22 courts, requesting a total of \$565,223. At the conclusion of their projects, courts that receive grants will be required to submit a final report to TCP on the use of the grants and their effectiveness. The information is summarized and shared with the 38 smallest county courts in California.

● For more information on the Small County Mini-Grant Program, visit <http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/minigrants>, or contact Linda Theuriet, 415-865-7608, e-mail: linda.theuriet@jud.ca.gov. ■

Following are the recipients of fiscal year 2000-2001 mini-grants, a brief summary of each of their projects, and the amount of funding each received as part of the Small County Mini-Grant Program (the first court listed is the designated "lead" court).

Butte, Del Norte, Glenn, Lassen, Sutter, and Yuba Counties Providing instructional workshops and motivational seminars to improve customer service (\$21,500).

Imperial County Conducting a reorganization, reclassification, and salary study of the court personnel system (\$17,193).

Kings County Providing training to judicial officers, administrators, and staff on general human resources components (\$6,250).

San Benito County Reviewing organizational structure and workflow in order to revise and update the current strategic plan and future budget requests (\$22,500).

Santa Cruz County Evaluating courtroom clerk deployment in relation to compatible courts, and providing alternatives (\$10,000).

Siskiyou and Modoc Counties Developing a pilot program that enables the two courts to hold hearings in a mutual location twice a month (\$14,037).

Tuolumne, Amador, and Calaveras Counties Conducting a study to determine staffing needs, a location, and procedures for a joint human resources unit (\$30,000).

Yolo County Providing training to management on how to re-engineer business processes (\$3,520).

Judicial Selection Summit Issues *Call to Action*

Court leaders, legislative representatives, and other participants in the National Summit on Improving Judicial Selection released a *Call to Action* in January that sets forth recommendations on state judicial election processes.

Concerned over the increasingly expensive and aggressive nature of judicial campaigns and fearing that the trend may be jeopardizing public confidence in the courts, Texas Chief

Justice Thomas R. Phillips, Texas Senate Judiciary Committee chair Rodney Ellis, and the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) coordinated a summit that took place December 8-9 in Chicago. The event brought together 95 state judicial and legislative leaders to analyze existing and potential problems in judicial election systems.

Summit participants discussed options for reform in four

key areas:

- ◆ Partisan elections and terms of elective office;
- ◆ Judicial election campaign conduct;
- ◆ Voter awareness and participation in judicial elections; and
- ◆ Campaign finances in judicial election campaigns.

The summit proceedings resulted in the *Call to Action*. An overwhelming majority of judicial and legislative leaders and other summit participants endorsed the 20 recommendations set forth in the action plan, but several attendees expressed dissent in regard to some, and one

attendee in regard to all, of the endorsements. No individual statements of concurrence or dissent will be published. The *Call to Action* was never presented to the Conference of Chief Justices or any other organization for endorsement and seeks to speak only for the participants in the summit.

● For more information and a complete list of the recommendations from the summit, visit NCSC's Web site at www.ncsc.dni.us, or contact Lynn Grimes, National Center for State Courts, 757-259-1812, e-mail: lgrimes@ncsc.dni.us. ■

The *Call to Action* by the National Summit on Improving Judicial Selection recommends that all states with elected judges consider 20 initiatives to improve their judicial elections. Summaries of the initiatives follow.

JUDICIAL ELECTION STRUCTURE

- 1 All judicial elections, whether direct or retention, should be conducted in a nonpartisan manner.
- 2 States with relatively short judicial terms of office should consider lengthening them.
- 3 Any judge appointed to fill a vacant judicial position should serve a substantial period in office before the initial election. After the initial election, the judge should serve a full term before a second election.

CAMPAIGN CONDUCT

- 4 Educational programs on state election laws, judicial canons, and sanctions for violations should be conducted for all judicial candidates together with their campaign staffs, consultants, and interested family members.
- 5 Hotlines should be established by the Legislature, the judiciary, or the appropriate judicial discipline body to respond expeditiously to questions about campaign conduct, campaign finance, judicial ethics, and related issues.
- 6 Nongovernmental monitoring groups should be established to encourage fair and ethical judicial campaigns.
- 7 Canons of judicial conduct and state laws regarding judicial campaign activity should be re-examined to ensure that they promote fair elections while safeguarding the right to free speech.
- 8 Procedures should be studied for resolving any professional discipline complaints that arise about a campaign before the election.

VOTER AWARENESS

- 9 State and local governments should prepare and disseminate judicial candidate voter guides, by print and electronic means, to all registered voters before any judicial election, at no cost to judicial candidates.

- 10 Congress should provide a free federal mailing frank for any voters' guide sponsored by a state or local government.

- 11 Bar associations, either alone or working with a larger, balanced group of concerned citizens and organizations, should conduct evaluations of judges.

- 12 The judiciary should consider establishing independent and objective judicial performance evaluations with appropriate safeguards.

- 13 Media outlets should broadcast debates between judicial candidates, and should sponsor such debates if other appropriate groups are not doing so.

- 14 The judiciary, the bar, and other interested groups should devise ongoing programs to educate the public about the judicial process.

- 15 Courts should use their Web sites to explain the judicial role to the public.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

- 16 States in which candidates compete for judicial positions should consider adopting public funding for at least some judicial elections.
- 17 States should adopt systems for disclosing campaign contributions and expenditures readily without being unreasonably burdensome.
- 18 By statute or judicial conduct code provisions, states should set appropriate limits on the sizes of campaign contributions to judicial campaigns.
- 19 States should consider adoption of the 1999 amendments to the American Bar Association's Model Code of Judicial Conduct respecting judicial campaign finance, as appropriate in each jurisdiction.
- 20 States should discuss creative ways, consistent with the right of free speech, to apply rules on contribution limits and financial disclosure to group and individual donors as well as to candidates and political parties.

Jury Summit

Continued from page 1

in addition to those already mentioned. These include allowing midtrial summarizing commentary from each side; reopening closing arguments (with subject matter limited to the issues of fact or law that jurors identify as troublesome) when a jury appears to be hung; and setting time limits for trials (which Judge Chirlin monitors using a chess clock), giving each side a specified amount of time within which to present its case. In regard to implementing such changes, Judge Chirlin stressed that, "even though the bench must be guided by the past, it is important to think creatively about jury system improvements

in order to run cases as effectively as possible."

In the session "Court Support and Education," Annette Kirby detailed the education programs undertaken by the Superior Court of San Joaquin County. Recognizing that juror education helps reduce criticism and the intimidation jurors may feel about jury service, San Joaquin County developed a "Courtroom to Schoolroom" program in which 22 judges visit local classrooms and the students, in turn, visit the judge at his or her courthouse. The court also reaches out to local community organizations to provide information on jury service and the court system.

Ms. Kirby indicated that "one of the main complaints received from jurors is that they are not informed of the nature of

delays in court proceedings." To help resolve this, the San Joaquin County courts have a staff of six volunteer judges who daily provide orientation to jurors about jury service. San Joaquin County also has a strong noncompliance program with a "Come see the judge" letter as its first step. This letter alone reverses 56 percent of the initial nonresponses.

● For more information on jury improvements in California, contact John Larson, Trial Court Programs Division, 415-865-7589.

For details of California's in-court trial procedures (including tips on utilizing jury innovations), see the new bench handbook Jury Management. For a copy of the handbook, contact Bob Schindewolf, Supervising Attorney, Center for Judicial Education and Research, 415-865-7798. ■



Judith S. Kaye, Chief Judge of the State of New York, thanks New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani for his participation in Jury Summit 2001. Held January 31-February 3 in New York City, the summit brought together judges, jurors, and court experts to share news of jury system improvements that are being implemented throughout the country. Photo: Faye Ellman

New Certification Policy for Case Management Systems

The Court Technology Advisory Committee has adopted a first-of-its-kind case management system (CMS) certification policy to ensure that courts have proven technology available for their case processing. The policy, a product of the committee's CMS Policy Team, will govern the certification of case management systems in California's trial courts. The CMS Policy Team was given the additional task of developing minimum functional standards for case management systems.

The CMS certification policy represents a historic step in the judicial branch. For the first time, the trial courts have articulated their needs in case processing technology and publicly issued these requirements to the vendor community.

"The certification policy is important because we can now hold vendors accountable for a fully functional court management system," says CMS Policy Team member Margie Borjon-Miller, who serves as deputy executive officer for the Superior Court of Ventura County. "We received input from vendors on the new policy, and most are open-minded about the requirements."

CERTIFICATION POLICY

A key provision of the Judicial Council's Tactical Plan for Court Technology, CMS certification guarantees that both vendor-provided and custom solutions meet the business requirements of the California trial courts. The CMS certification policy outlines the process by which vendors and courts with custom systems

can apply for certification. A CMS will be certified by case type or model to ensure that a complete package of functions is available in the system.

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) will certify systems through an evaluation team composed of trial court volunteers with experience in both technology and operations. When the evaluation team receives a certification request, it will schedule a multiday demonstration of the functionality of that CMS, using standardized demonstration scripts. If the demonstration is successful, a CMS that handles one or more specified case types will be certified; if unsuccessful, the vendor or court can reapply for certification the following year.

CERTIFICATION LEVELS

Minimally, a certified system should perform basic system functions, meet California statistical reporting requirements, perform accounting functions, and be connected with the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Justice.

There are three levels of certification, with level A being the highest.

◆ A **level C** system fulfills statutory and other legal mandates; reports information to the AOC and state justice agencies in accordance with established standards and guidelines; and uses automated technology to effectively manage caseload and workflow.

◆ A **level B** system contains enhancements of basic system performance; improves

clerk's office operations; expedites caseload and workflow management; and enhances judicial or management access to information within the court. Level B will become level C in one to two years, as noted for each requirement. Level B encompasses two types of functionality: (1) new statutory or other legal mandates (which will become level C requirements in one year) and (2) optional functionalities that are highly desirable to a court (and will become level C requirements in one to two years).

◆ A **level A** system provides courts with innovative technology that improves courtroom efficiency, enhances public access to court information, or adapts proven or new technologies to the court environment. Level A will become level B in three to five years, as noted for each requirement.

FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The CMS Policy Team, composed of 12 trial court volunteers representing the four regional Trial Court Technology Groups, developed minimum functional requirements for any case management system. In developing these requirements, the team broadly defined the functionality that should be present in any CMS; individual courts may make additional requirements to address local case processing needs. The minimal functions follow the business processes of the trial courts in sequential order, from receiving a filing at the front counter and initiating a case file

to processing the case through the adjudication process and archiving the case record.

At a recent vendor conference, the CMS Policy Team presented vendors with the functional requirements and the certification timeline. The team communicated to vendors that they have one year to modify their case management systems to meet the functional requirements and to make such "California-compliant" versions of the software available to their customer courts.

"We had a very positive response to the certification requirements from the vendor community," says CMS Policy Team member Mary Lou DesRochers, who serves as the executive director of planning and research for the Superior Court of Orange County. "The policy enables vendors to focus their services on the needs of California's courts. They can concentrate their offerings instead of trying to hit a moving target."

Implementation of the certification requirements will be phased in, starting with a focus on new procurements and working through the CMS user groups to assess the California versions of commercial products. Existing systems, particularly custom systems that are highly integrated at the local level, will present challenges in relation to certification.

The CMS certification requirements, which will be coordinated with the branchwide technology planning that is already under way, will be published and updated annually.

● To view the certification policy in its entirety, visit www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/cmsspol.htm. For more information, contact Pat Kilkenny, 415-865-7426, e-mail: patricia.kilkenny@jud.ca.gov. ■

www.courtinfo.ca.gov

NEWS FROM THE CALIFORNIA COURTS WEB SITE

The public California Courts Web site at www.courtinfo.ca.gov and the courts' private site at <http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov> continually add new information to keep the public and courts informed on the latest judicial programs and resources. Following are a few of the most recent additions.

New Forms for the New Year

Seventy-seven new and amended Judicial Council forms affecting a wide range of court services, including change of name, guardianship in probate cases, and orders for psychotropic medication in juvenile cases, are now available online. www.courtinfo.ca.gov/forms

New Trial Court Sites

More local court Web pages have been added to the California Courts Web site to provide essential information on some of the smaller courts in the state. Recent additions include Colusa, Del Norte, Imperial, Modoc, Mariposa, Nevada, Plumas, San Benito, Santa Barbara, Sutter, and Trinity Counties. www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/trial

Mediator Locator

Forms and a list of mediators for the mandatory mediation program at the Court of Ap-

peal, First Appellate District—aimed at expediting the cost-effective resolution of civil appeals—are available online.

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/courtsofappeal/1stDistrict/faq/answer16.htm

The Big Picture

The Judicial Council's updated Strategic Plan and inaugural Operational Plan (which identifies shorter term, state-level objectives for improving court administration) can be viewed in full.

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference

Capitol Connection

The current edition of *Capitol Connection* provides information on Judicial Council-sponsored legislation as well as interviews with Senator Martha Escutia and Assembly Member Darrell Steinberg.

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courtadmin/aoc/capconn.htm

Jury Management Tips

Details on California's in-court trial procedures as well as tips for implementing jury innovations in the courtroom are described in a new publica-

tion titled *Bench Handbook: Jury Management*.

<http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov/education/cjer/index.htm>

Money Management

The draft *Trial Court Financial Policies and Procedures Manual* has been completed and distributed for comment.

<http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/tctg/tcpolproc.htm>

Grants Bulletin

A new Grants Bulletin describes all Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) grant programs that are available to local courts during fiscal year 2000–2001. The programs represent over \$52 million in grant funds for the courts, and this is the first time that a comprehensive list of grant programs for the courts has been compiled.

<http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference>

Historic Courthouse Postcard Collection

Graphic files for the historic courthouse postcards are posted on Serranus to enable courts to reproduce and customize additional cards. The postcards were produced by the AOC as part of the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the California court system.

<http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov/postcards.htm>